

Review of *Research Handbook on Climate Change Adaptation Policy*

E. Carina H. Keskitalo & Benjamin L. Preston (Editors). *Research Handbook on Climate Change Adaptation Policy*, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing. 2019. ISBN: 9781786432513 (hardcover), ISBN: 9781786432520 (eBook).

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Background of editors and contributors: The *Research Handbook on Climate Change Adaptation Policy*, edited by Keskitalo and Preston, is a collection of contributions on the theme of climate change adaptation policies. E. Carina H. Keskitalo is Professor of Political Science at the Department of Geography, Umeå University, Sweden, with a focus on environmental policy; Benjamin Preston is a Senior Policy Researcher and Director of RAND's Infrastructure Resilience and Environmental Policy Program, with a background in environmental biology. The contributors' backgrounds provide an intersectional approach which looks at adaptation policies from a social science perspective, offering a clear indication of the choice to look at climate change adaptation policies through the integrated approach of social theoretical frameworks developed in a multilayered system of governance. Short of that, the contributors offer a unique bird's eye view from the perspective of 14 countries: Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, the U.K. and the U.S.A.

The book's approach in summary: The editors bookend 22 substantive chapters with an opening and closing chapter of their own. Their approach comprises three main stages of analysis: in Part I, an observation of adaptation policies through the lens of social theory; in Part II, a review of theoretical frameworks in relation to adaptation; and in Parts III and IV, an analysis of case-study areas to investigate adaptation in practice at different levels and across sectoral and cross-cutting perspectives.

Two main observations emerge from reading and deeply engaging with this book: the first is that climate change adaptation policies need to be developed using a

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multi-layered and multi-fold spectrum, as presented in “Multi-Level Climate Governance Supporting Local Action: Instruments enhancing climate change mitigation and adaptation at the local level” (with a rich bibliography) compiled by Paola Adriázola, Eleni Dellas, Eleni and Dennis Tänzler.

The second observation is that climate change adaptation represents a social challenge, triggering social and transformative changes at both the individual and collective levels. Adaptation implies changes in social behaviours and dynamics to respond to climate change impacts.

The reader is masterfully guided and directed by the two editors, who in their introductory chapter, offer a reading key to adaptation in the context of social theory: adaptation policies are explored across multi-levels of governance. The editors explain that in this sense policy sciences theory and theoretical frameworks are used as diagnostic factors that explain state-of-the-art adaptation policies and identify directions for future policy research (p. 6).

They equally acknowledge a gap between the theoretical frameworks used and social processes that trigger adaptation responses, and identify a solution for implementing adaptation and the driving factors of adaptation responses.

Additionally, while introducing the need and importance of theoretical frameworks in the understanding of social responses to adaptation, the editors query why theory is so important in the context of social sciences. Their answer is that theory helps to build on multiple cases where it can coexist with other theories.

The editors, moreover, agree that social science theories need to include case studies. In other words, informing case studies of social systems with a theoretical understanding is seen as a robust response to understanding overarching systems and therefore the complexities of adaptation (p. 10).

Evaluation of the book: The collection of contributions covers a complex variety of adaptation processes and fills in a gap in climate change research which has not taken social theory into due account. The authors capture alternative perspectives, underpinning climate change adaptation in a comprehensive way, moving from a spectrum of possibilities that cover not only “what” is happening, but also “why” (see for example, Ian Noble, chapter 1, p. 43).

Scholarship: All of the authors take into account the most recent literature on the topic and address it sufficiently and appropriately. Angela Oels, for example, in chapter 7 fully develops the topic of the limits of participation in adaptation governance, addressing the Foucault-Habermasian (respectively: 1987–2007 and 1990) debate on participatory processes, as well as the most recent discussions on the need to see climate change as a relationship problem (O’Brien, 2016). Drawing from such a robust doctrinal system, Oels comes to the conclusion that adaptation governance should focus on the establishment of co-management and bottom-up systems, to effectively advance transformative changes.

Some constructive criticism: The only weak aspect that I see from the richness of the collection is that the large number of contributions at times is detrimental to the coherence and consistency of the internal structure of the book. For example, the rationale to include a distinction between different levels/country contexts on the one side and sectoral and cross-cutting perspectives on the other, is at times hard to fully grasp. For example, some chapters in Part IV cover adaptation policy from both a cross-cutting perspective and from a country context. Chapter 20 (co-authored by Tayanah O' Donnell, Timothy F. Smith and Sarah Connor) and chapter 21 (co-authored by Rodney J. Keenana, Harry Nelson, E.C.H. Keskitalo and Johan Bergh), include both a cross-cutting perspective and a country-context analysis (respectively on the Australian coast, and on Australia, Canada and Sweden). On another and perhaps reviewer-biased note: there is a lack of emphasis and attention dedicated to perspectives outside the nation state. With few exceptions, little attention is given to systems and levels of governance outside the perimeters and interests of nation states. For some distinct voices see: chapter 3 (co-authored by Joseph Wenta and Jan McDonald), referring to indigenous rights and systems; chapter 13 (co-authored by Meg Parsons and Johanna Nalau), on small islands and indigenous peoples; and chapter 17 (co-authored by Lars Otto Naess and Michelle Twena), focusing on local and traditional governance in Kenya.

Comparisons: In comparison to other works in the field, the book shares some similarities to *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives*, edited by Riley E. Dunlap and Robert J. Brulle (Oxford University Press, 2015), even though the latter does not address adaptation policies in a social context from a multidimensional perspective. Another book that analyses the impacts of climate change on the social sphere is *Climate Change as Social Drama: Global Warming in the Public Sphere*, by Philip Smith and Nicolas Howe (Cambridge University Press, 2015), which focuses primarily on the U.S. and U.K. contexts.

Impact: The book has the potential to mark a turning point in a number of ways. It is a unique intersectional study of adaptation policy from the perspective of multilayered social systems. Scholars (social scientists, including legal scholars, will relate in particular to chapter 3, co-authored by Joseph Wenta and Jan McDonald, on the role of law and legal systems in climate change and adaptation policy) and policy-makers will gain a deeper understanding of the implications of adaptation policies in social contexts. In addition to this, individual chapters have autonomous value and can be used in lectures, seminars, and group work on contemporary issues regarding climate change adaptation from a multidisciplinary and multi-dimensional perspective: for example, by looking at the intersection of adaptation and the European Union (chapter 9, co-authored by Robbert Biesbrok and Rob Swart); adaptation and finance (chapter 18, Åsa Persson and Aaron Atteridge); adaptation and water,

land, forest, anthropocene (respectively: chapter 19 by Kevin Grecksch; chapter 20 by Tayanah O'Donnell, Timothy F. Smith and Sarah Connor; chapter 21 by Rodney J. Keenan, Harry Nelson, E.C. H. Keskitalo and Johan Bergh; chapter 22 by Debra Javeline and Sophia N. Chau) or adaptation and health systems (chapter 23 by Kristie L. Ebi and Kathryn J. Bowen).